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A.—(*a*) No. According to the census report of 1921 there has been in the Presidency a decline in the number of lepers from 16,858 in 1911 to 15,753 in 1921 and in the City a decline from 272 to 228.

(*b*) & (*c*) The Government do not consider that the extension of the Act III of 1898 would serve any useful purpose, as recent investigations made regarding the degree of infection of leprosy in its various stages have shown that the provisions of the Act are out of date.

(*d*) No. The Government are considering the question of dealing with the early infectious cases so as to prevent the spread of the disease and cure the persons afflicted with it.

Mr. BASHEER AHMAD SAYEED :—"May I know whether the Government will take any steps to prevent the vagabond lepers in the city of Madras from going about the streets ?"

The hon. Diwan Bahadur R. N. AROGYASWAMI MUDALIYAR :—"It is a matter for the police, Sir."

Scarcity of drinking-water in Namakkal taluk.

* 757 *Q.*—Mr. BASHEER AHMAD SAYEED : Will the hon. the Minister for Public Health and the hon. the Law Member be pleased to state—

(*a*) whether the Government are aware that the ryots of Namakkal taluk in the district of Salem have been suffering from scarcity of drinking-water for the past five years ;

(*b*) whether the Government have received a memorial from the ryots of Namakkal recently regarding scarcity of drinking-water in the taluk, and whether the Government have investigated into the grievance of the ryots ;

(*c*) whether the Government have taken any steps to provide facilities for drinking-water to the ryots of the said taluk, and if so, whether the Government will be pleased to make a statement of the steps so far taken ;

(*d*) whether the Government propose to take such steps as may be necessary to permanently remove the scarcity of drinking-water from the taluk of Namakkal and whether the Government have considered any scheme therefor and if so, to place the same on the table of the House ;

(*e*) whether the Government has at any time considered the question of supplying water facilities to Namakkal by the construction of a channel from the Mettur dam, and if not, whether they propose to institute an investigation of the scheme ; and

(*f*) whether the Government have sunk any wells for relieving the scarcity of drinking-water in Namakkal, and if not, whether they propose to take steps to sink a sufficient number of wells at an early date ?

A.—(*a*) The Collector reported in January 1927 that there was scarcity of drinking-water in the taluk.

The Government are not aware that there has been a scarcity of water for the past five years.

(*b*) No memorial has been received from the ryots of Namakkal on the subject.

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(c), (d) & (f) The provision of an adequate supply of drinking-water in the area under its control is primarily the duty of the local board concerned. The Government have made the following grants for the improvement of the water-supply in the rural areas of the Salem district during the past two years :—

			Amount allotted.	Amount spent.
			RS.	RS.
1925–26	...	...	20,000	16,116
1926–27	...	...	8,634	8,634
1927–28	...	...	6,329	...

The Government are considering the question of making an additional grant for the same purpose during the current year and of further grants in subsequent years.

The Government do not propose to take any other steps for the improvement of the water-supply in the Namakkal taluk. It is for the taluk board concerned to sink the required number of wells, meeting the expenditure involved from its own funds and such funds as may be placed at its disposal by the district board out of the Government grants.

(e) The question of supplying Namakkal with drinking-water from Mettur does not seem to have been considered. The Government have considered the possibility of supplying water for the irrigation of 27,000 acres of land in the Salem district from Mettur; but the idea has been given up as serious engineering difficulties would be involved and the proposal would not be financially profitable. The Government do not propose to make the investigation now.

* The hon. the PRESIDENT :—" For the benefit of Members who were not present when the names were called, I will now take the House through the second round of questions."

Inferior Service

Pay of dufterbunds in Tahsildars' offices and Stationary Magistrates' courts

*7?8 Q.—Diwan Bahadur M. KRISHNAN NAYAR : Will the hon. the Member for Revenue be pleased to state—

(a) whether the Government are aware that the 'dufterbunds' in the Tahsildars' offices and the Stationary Magistrates' courts are generally made to do the work of clerks also; and

(b) whether, having regard to this fact, the Government intend raising the pay of these 'dufterbunds' from Rs. 12—18 to Rs. 25—35?

A.—(a) & (b) If by the term 'dufterbunds' attenders are meant, the hon. Member is referred to the answers to clauses (b), (c) and (d) of question No. 2444 given in the Legislative Council on 2nd September 1926.

Mr. G. HARISARVOTTAMA RAO :—" May I know from the hon. the Revenue Member whether, before the introduction of this scale in 1920 and before the School Final was fixed as the minimum qualification, these dufterbunds or attenders were not in some cases acting as clerks ? "